

Technology in the Music Classroom Lesson Plan Assignments

Name: Megan Woods

Lesson Plan Type: Responding to Music

Lesson Title/Description: An American Elegy: Using music to respond to tragedy.

Class/Grade: High School Percussion Class (Grades 9-12)

Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Standards:

MU:Re7.1.E.IIIa Use research and personally-developed criteria to justify choices made when selecting music, citing knowledge of the music, and individual and ensemble purpose and context

MU:Re7.2.E.IIIa Demonstrate and justify how the analysis of structures, contexts, and performance decisions inform the response to music.

| Learning Outcomes | Assessment Evidence |
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| By the end of this lesson, students will understand the background behind Frank Ticheli's "An American Elegy" | Evidence: Students will complete an exit ticket in which they describe the context of "An American Elegy." |
| By the end of this lesson, students will be able to make connections between music and events. | Evidence: Students will provide their own example of a piece of music which connects to an event of their choosing. |
| By the end of this lesson, students will demonstrate how the context behind "An American Elegy" affects the techniques utilized when playing the piece. | Evidence: Students will observe all written stylistic marks in the music. |

Prior Knowledge and Skills:

- Students have already been assigned their percussion parts for "An American Elegy."
- Students already know how to play their instrument and read the music for the piece.
- Students can already demonstrate understanding of grade-appropriate stylistic marks including tenuto, accent, staccato, slurs, ties, etc.

Materials:

- Student Chromebooks
- Teacher Computer
- Sound system.
- Google Form exit ticket

Learning Activities:

- Students will begin with an introduction to the piece “An American Elegy” by Frank Ticheli. Teacher will read the Program Notes to students, which read:

An American Elegy is, above all, an expression of hope. It was composed in memory of those who lost their lives at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, and to honor the survivors. It is offered as a tribute to their great strength and courage in the face of a terrible tragedy. I hope the work can also serve as one reminder of how fragile and precious life is and how intimately connected we all are as human beings.

I was moved and honored by this commission invitation, and deeply inspired by the circumstances surrounding it. Rarely has a work revealed itself to me with such powerful speed and clarity. The first eight bars of the main melody came to me fully formed in a dream. Virtually every element of the work was discovered within the span of about two weeks. The remainder of my time was spent refining, developing, and orchestrating.

The work begins at the bottom of the ensemble's register, and ascends gradually to a heartfelt cry of hope. The main theme that follows, stated by the horns, reveals a more lyrical, serene side of the piece. A second theme, based on a simple repeated harmonic pattern, suggests yet another, more poignant mood. These three moods - hope, serenity, and sadness - become intertwined throughout the work, defining its complex expressive character. A four-part canon builds to a climactic quotation of the Columbine *Alma Mater*. The music recedes, and an offstage trumpeter is heard, suggesting a celestial voice - a heavenly message. The full ensemble returns with a final, exalted statement of the main theme.

- Teacher will explain, “When Ticheli wrote this piece, Columbine did not have an official alma mater, so he composed one for them. Here is a recording of their alma mater.”
- Play video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkZ393_D5UA
- Students will listen to the recording of “An American Elegy”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EovQC3BBUHs>
- Teacher will lead a discussion, asking students to reflect on how this piece connects to the tragedy experienced by Columbine High School.
- Teacher will ask students to identify other tragedies that have occurred (emphasizing the importance of remaining respectful at all times) and write them on the board.
- Teacher will say, “Now, find a piece of music that you think connects to a tragedy of your choosing. Then write a one-page paper describing the tragedy, piece of music you have selected, and how the two are connected.”
- Students will submit their paper through the Google Classroom.
- Students will fill out an exit ticket through Google Forms: <https://forms.gle/YrxKbeYVqy21vfo97>
- If time permits, students will rehearse their parts for the piece. This piece is not heavy in percussion writing, so students should be able to play through their parts in their entirety within one instructional period.